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ABSTRACT

This videotape viewers' guide is intended to help facilitate instruction in managing sibling conflict. The guide first provides an overview of the 19-minute videotape which explains how parents can help children learn to solve conflicts on their own and why parents need to establish clear family policies to help siblings get along and maintain individual rights. The guide then lists what parents will know after viewing and discussing the videotape, including: how to prepare a child for an expected sibling; how and when to intervene in sibling disputes and the negative effects of comparing siblings. Next, the guide provides a brief exercise to precede viewing the videotape, and discussion questions for use after viewing, including how the videotape illustrates handling physical conflict and what family policies the videotape suggests. Research and writing projects for parents are also suggested. Pages reproducible for handouts are included in the guide, covering suggested ways to respond to sibling conflicts, such as logical and natural consequences or cool down period; non-negotiable family policies; tips for introducing a new baby to siblings; and characteristics of regressive behavior that children might exhibit in response to a new sibling. (HTH)

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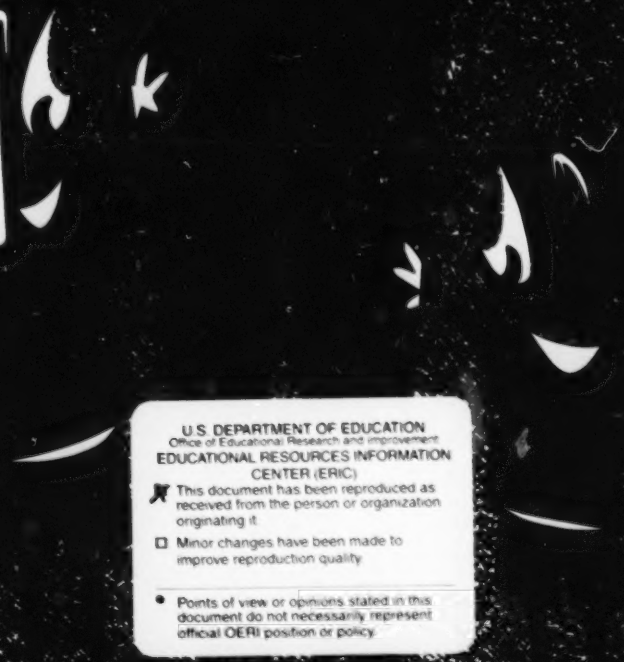

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Study Guide

My Brother Bit Me!
Parenting Siblings

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Contents

My Brother Bit Me! Parenting Siblings contains a 19 minute close-captioned videotape and this guide which owners may duplicate for classroom use only. Catalog Number 223. ISBN 0-917159-93-4. $89.00

Overview

Being a parent of one child is a challenge. But when that child turns into a sibling, new problems and possibilities arise. Every day life is filled with situations that cause conflict between siblings-- sharing toys, getting along with siblings, settling arguments with siblings.

Bill is a single parent with two school age children, one hamster, and one Nintendo®. How can he keep Susan and Mark from fighting without becoming a full time family umpire?

Meet Alex. He's only two but about to become a big brother. How do his parents prepare Alex for this new role?

Andrew is only eighteen months but wants to do everything his five year old sibling does. How do his parents give both children individual attention without playing favorites?

Watch ***My Brother Bit Me!*** to help your students learn:

- How parents can help their kids learn to solve conflicts on their own instead of demanding ready-made solutions presented by adults.
- Kids act in ways appropriate to their age. This might sound obvious, but understanding exactly what is appropriate takes parental wisdom.

- Why parents need to establish clear family policies to help siblings get along and maintain individual rights.
- How to teach kids the difference between "tattling" and "telling." Parents don't want a kid who "tattles" on every minor infraction, but do want a child who speaks up if a sibling needs help.
- How to criticize or compliment without comparing siblings. "How come your brother manages to pick up his dirty clothes and you don't?" sends unwanted messages.

Objectives

After viewing and discussing *My Brother Bit Me! Parenting Siblings* viewers will know:

- How to prepare a child for an expected sibling.
- Characteristics of regression after a sibling's birth.
- How and when to intervene in sibling disputes .
- Age appropriate behavior for sibling interactions.
- How to develop siblings' conflict resolution skills.
- How to acknowledge children's feelings to help them cope with frustration and anger.
- Non-negotiable family policies that will help siblings maintain individual rights.
- How to encourage siblings to acknowledge & express their feelings.
- That comparing siblings will encourage hostility and limit their development.

Before Showing Video

Ask how many viewers are siblings. Ask them to call out words that describe their feelings toward their siblings while growing up. List their descriptions on the board.

Then ask them how they hope their children will treat each other. List on the board.

Discussion Questions

1. The video discusses the importance of connection between parent and child. Describe what this means. ***(The parent believes the child is inherently good. The child really matters to the parent. The child feels cherished. The parent puts the child first when needed.)***

How does a parent connect with a child? Do you think that when children loose control, they need to re-establish connections with their parents?

2. Discuss ways a parent can prepare a child for the birth of a new baby. Do you think this preparation is important? Why or why not?

3. What is regression? How can a parent handle regression?

4. The video states that many adults feel that their parents had favorite children. Do you feel this is true?

5. Discuss how the video suggests parents help settle siblings' conflicts. What are the three steps to the method? Try it at home with children under your care.

6. What does the video suggest a parent do when siblings are physically aggressive? (*Separate them for a cool-down, acknowledge their angry feelings, then encourage that they resolve their conflict.)*

7.Discuss the hand-out on page 8, "Responding to Siblings Conflicts."

8. Susan and Mark are very interested in their hamster Fuzzy. How can pets help children begin to learn parenting skills? (*From pets children can learn to take care of physical needs, to keep animals safe.)*
What should a parent do if Susan and Mark had suggested something dangerous to Fuzzy-- (e.g.: put Fuzzy's cage in the freezing garage)? (*The parent would explain that Fuzzy might freeze; then send the kids back to find another solution.*

9. Describe two family policies does the video suggest will help siblings get along?
(*Respect another's stuff, tell don't tattle.*)
What other family policies would you suggest? Discuss the hand-out on family policies on page 11.

10. What does the video suggest a parent do when a child expresses negative feelings about a sibling?
(*Acknowledge the feeling, don't deny it. Encourage the child to express the feeling.*)

11. How should a parent handle tattling? How did your parents handle tattling?
In the video Stephen says, "Andrew made a big mess Mommy." Lisa responded, "You helped too."

The comment makes Stephen feel he has a responsibility. What else could she do?
(*She could also give Stephen the opportunity to be a role model for Andrew by saying, "Maybe you can show Andrew how to clean up a mess."*)
Some parents have the policy, "The one who tattles gets punished."
Other parents do not respond to tattling. They say something like, "I'm sorry you aren't getting along" and pretend that the tattling did not occur.
Give some examples about adolescents that illustrate the difference between telling and tattling. (*Telling parents that a teen is about to run away could help him get out of trouble.*
Telling that a teen is pregnant will eventually help her and her baby find support. Telling if someone is about to drive while drunk could get him out of a life-threatening situation.)

12. Discuss the situation in the video where the mother left her three-year-old daughter with her seven-year-old son. (*A parent should probably not leave a child "home alone" until the child is at least ten. A parent should consider the age, maturity, and judgment of a child*)

13. What often happens when parents constantly compare siblings? (*The child who is unfavorable in the comparison often learns to resent his/her sibling).*

14. Agree or disagree: When parents use physical punishment such as spanking, siblings learn:
that if you are bigger, you can hit;
that it is OK to hit to get your way;
that hitting is acceptable behavior.

15. Discuss this quote from the video: "*Example is a powerful way to teach children how to handle conflict. When parents yell a lot, their children may also turn up the volume to settle disputes. If parents get out boxing gloves to settle disagreements, they may have kids who regularly slug each other.*

Research & Writing Projects

1. Write and prepare a report on the following statement.
Children learn to handle anger by how they see it handled in the home, at school, with peers, and in the media.

2. Research how children learn to play. Include in your report: solitary play, parallel play, cooperative play, games with rules.

3. Think of a sibling conflict and write our or role play how the parent might respond using these steps: Connect; Identify the conflict; offer encouragement

Responding To Siblings Conflicts

Here are seven ways to respond when siblings misbehave.

① Consequences

Children must learn that actions bring consequences. Hit, kick, or spit, and you sit" is a logical consequence. A logical consequence is a *reasonable* result of conduct. A natural consequence is the *direct* result of conduct. "If you throw the toy, it will break."

② Clarification

When Dad shows Susan how to throw her soiled clothing in the hamper, he clarifies the behavior he expects.

Children respond best to clear, specific directives. Criticism like "Why can't you throw your clothes in the hamper like your brother?" demoralizes children.

③ Conflict Resolution Skills

Build conflict resolution skills by helping kids generate alternatives. Ask, "Can you think of a good way to settle this disagreement?" Asking a child to think of a solution plants the idea that she can resolve a dispute.

Myrna Shure, author of ***Raising a Thinking Child*** (Pocket Books) suggests teaching preschoolers words that introduce alternatives: Now or later? All or some? Same or different? Is or is not? Do you want some of your potatoes or all your potatoes? Using word pairs, children learn how to take charge of negotiating instead of waiting for the parent to negotiate with them.

④ Distraction

Distraction works especially well with younger children. To use distraction, a parent changes the activity that causes the dispute between siblings.
When Stephen wants to play with the same toy that Andrew has, his mom distracted him.

⑤ Cool Down Period

When Susan and Mark started hitting, Dad made them sit long enough for their anger to cool.
When children are physically aggressive with one another, isolate them until their anger cools. Make sure they are far enough apart to that they cannot start their aggression all over again.

⑥ Acknowledge Feelings

A strong connection between parent and children gives kids the foundation to work through anger they may have toward their brothers and sisters.
Ask each child how they feel about what happened. Helping children talk about their feelings not only makes them more able to handle intense emotions calmly, it makes it easier for them to understand others' feelings.
Help toddlers and preschoolers learn words for feelings. Encourage children to use words like happy, sad, mad, scared, proud, frustrated, embarrassed, disappointed, worried, or relieved. This helps them become comfortable talking about feelings and needs.

Non-Negotiable Policies

Some policies governing sibling behavior are "non-negotiable."

Here are some non-negotiable family policies that can help increase harmony between siblings:

- Respect another's belongings.
- No obscene language.
- If a child destroys a sibling's toy, he/she must rebuild, replace, or arrange a trade.
- Tell, don't tattle.
- No teasing, name calling, insulting or bullying.
- No hitting, kicking, biting, or scratching.
- Complete homework.
- Complete chores.
- Complete personal hygiene.

Common mistakes

- Negotiating about non-negotiables.
- Making all policies non-negotiable.

The best way to handle non-negotiables:

If a child wants to debate a non-negotiable, stop her, but give a compensation for accepting the non-negotiable.:

"After you clear the table, you can watch the video."

Bringing a New Baby Home

Before Birth

- Don't let the child think the baby will be a playmate; be clear about that babies do little but eat, sleep and cry.
- Show children pictures of themselves as infants.
- Prepare an older child for how he will be included in the life of the new baby. Tell him what the family's daily life will consist of when the baby arrives.

After Birth

- Don't expect an older child to smother the new baby with tenderness.
- Plan time alone with each child in the family. Dealing with a child one-on one helps a parent focus attention on his needs. Time together will help the child be aware of feelings and problems that may not immediately surface.
- Talk and play with older children when the new baby is awake as well as asleep. This will prevent older children from equating a parent's attention with the baby's being out of sight.
- Make individual brag boards. Display each child's creativity in his own special place to reassure

Regressive Behavior

Regressive behavior can occur at a week, a month, at seven months (most common) or even longer after the arrival of a second baby.

Young children may return to babyish habits in toilet training, eating or dressing, or baby talk. It may not signal jealousy; it may simply reflect stress.

Treat regressive behavior (especially wetting or dirtying pants) without punishment and use non-judgmental language. A return to diapers can be done matter of factly.

Indulge regressive behavior. Change the older child's clothes on changing table; add sprinkle of baby powder; serve table liquids in a bottle.

To a child being a baby is the key to getting a parent's attention. Regression seems to be a way to compete on the baby's own terms. A child may also be confused about why certain behavior is bad when he or she does it and acceptable when the baby does it.

Three-year-olds may swing between regression and anger about having some independence thwarted by the baby's needs and demands.

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